DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 191 608 RC 012 164

AUTHOR Kenkel, William F.
TITLE Life Plans of Low-Income Girls in the United States.
INSTITUTION Kentucky Univ., Lexington. Agricultural Experiment Station.
SPONS AGENCY Cooperative State Research Service (DOA), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE 7 Aug 80
NOTE 38p.: Paper presented at the World Congress for Rural Sociology (5th, Mexico City, August 7-12, 1980). Paper contributes to USDA Cooperative State Research Service Southern Regional Projects S-63 and S-126.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement: Age Differences: *Aspiration: Child Rearing: Comparative Analysis: *Disadvantaged Youth: Elementary Secondary Education: Expectation: Family Characteristics: *Family Planning: *Females: Longitudinal Studies: Low Income Groups: *Marriage: Parent Attitudes: Place of Residence: Racial Differences: *Rural Youth: Self Concept
IDENTIFIERS Southern Regional Research Projects: *United States (South)

ABSTRACT

A longitudinal study conducted in six southern states dealt with four population categories (poor youth, rural youth, black youth, and females) frequently neglected in status aspiration, career goal, and life plans research. The term "life plans" included educational and occupational aspirations as well as expectations of age at marriage, number of children desired, and place of residence desired. Analyses were organized into background, parenting, middle childhood, and high school factors. The sample (planned to yield as many blacks as whites and to restrict the study to subjects from areas marked by poverty and high unemployment) consisted of 311 primarily rural females who were questioned in 1969 as fifth or sixth graders and again in 1975 (if they had not married or dropped out of school) and the mothers of these girls. The following factors were found to be associated with "age at marriage" expectations: race: father's education: prestige of mother's occupation: perception of loving, punishing or demanding mother: occupational counseling of daughter by mother: self-concept: occupational and educational aspirations and expectations: occupational saliency: and residential preferences. Factors associated with larger family size expectations were: rural residence, black race, lower socioeconomic status, father unemployed, and lower prestige of desired and expected occupation. (AN)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED191608

ABSTRACT

Title: Life Plans of Low-Income Girls in the United States

Author: William F. Kenkel (U.S.A.)

Contact: William F. Kenkel, Department of Sociology, S-205, ASC-North, University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky 40546, U.S.A.

The study deals with four population categories frequently neglected in status-aspirations, career goals, and life plans research--the poor of both sexes, rural youth of both races, females of both races, and blacks. Life plan is conceptualized as including educational and occupational aspirations, age at marriage expectations, number of children expected, and desired place of residence. Emphasis is on age at marriage and family size expectations. Variables used to explain the differences in life plans within the sample are ordered as follows: (1) family background factors, such as race and parents' occupations; (2) middle-childhood factors, including educational and occupational aspirations, girls' self-concepts and parenting behavior of the mothers of the girls; and (3) adolescent factors, including educational and occupational aspirations, conception of the role of women, and the saliency of an occupational role as part of one's life plans.

Data come from a regional, longitudinal study conducted in six southern states of the United States. The sample was purposive to yield about as many blacks and whites and to restrict the study of those from areas marked by poverty and high unemployment. Young people responded to questionnaires while in the fifth or sixth grade in 1969 and their mothers were also interviewed. Data were again gathered from the students in 1976 when they were, or were expected to be, juniors or seniors in high school. The data set for the present study consists of over 300 girls who were interviewed at both time periods.

RC 012164

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

William F. Kenkel

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

LIFE PLANS OF LOW-INCOME GIRLS IN THE UNITED STATES

William F. Kenkel
Department of Sociology
University of Kentucky
Lexington, Kentucky 40546, U.S.A.

Prepared for Fifth World Congress for Rural Sociology
Mexico City, 7-12 August 1980

In their careful review of the literature, Falk and Cosby note that status attainment modeling originated for and was applied to the male population (1974). Until recently, few researchers attempted to apply the approach to females or to take into account the special circumstances of female status attainment. Actually, four population categories have been neglected in status-aspirations, career goals, and life plans research--poor youth, rural youth, females, and blacks. The present research is an attempt to correct these deficiencies. Its major thrust is on the extent to which low-income black and white rural girls have been affected by three major trends in American society: (1) the trend toward later marriage, (2) the trend toward smaller families, and (3) the trend for more women to see themselves as enacting roles in the productive economy, on a lifetime basis, and to prepare themselves for such roles.

Life plans is a broader concept than status-aspirations. Life plans, as here conceptualized, include educational and occupational aspirations, age at marriage expectations, the number of children desired, and the desired place of residence. While the roles of women have been changing, for the present it seems desirable to utilize the broad concept of life plans. Marriage and parenthood roles still have a greater impact on educational and occupational roles for women than they do for men.

The purposes of this paper are: (1) to describe the theoretical model that I have used in my studies of life plans, (2) to report some of the major findings,

and (3) to indicate gaps in the research or other areas that profitably could be investigated in an effort to explain differences in life plans.

Methodology

The data for this study are from Southern Regional Research Projects 63 and 126, a cooperative effort of the Agricultural Experiment Stations in six Southern states to study longitudinally the occupational and educational goals of low income youth. The first phase was conducted in 1969 and gathered data in the classroom from fifth and sixth graders and from their mothers by interview. The second phase was conducted in 1975 when the youth were, or could be expected to be, juniors or seniors in high school. In each state the principal investigator selected schools which served essentially depressed areas characterized by unemployment and poverty. Once the 28 schools had been selected, permission was obtained to administer questionnaires to entire fifth and sixth grade classes. Six years later, an attempt was made to locate the same students regardless where, or if, they were attending high school.

Completed questionnaires for both 1969 and 1975 were obtained from 946 youth, about half of them girls. Somewhat fewer than half were black. All of the white girls and 60% of the black girls were classified as rural. The sample for the present study consists of 311 females who were studied in both years, who had not dropped out of school by 1975, and who were not already married, and the mothers of these students. Age at marriage expectations were obtained only when the girls were juniors or seniors in high school. Educational and occupational aspirations and other data were obtained both when the respondents were in grade school and in high school. I consider this an unusually rich source of data, with information from the girls at two periods of time and from the girls' mothers. I have attempted to organize my analyses as follows.

Theoretical Model

Background factors. As shown in Figure 1, at the beginning of the theoretical path that leads to life plans are background factors, characteristics of the girl's family, such as race, residence, and parental education, that existed at or before the time the girl started school or maybe even before she was born. Another factor in this block of background characteristics is the girl's mental ability.

Parenting. The second block of factors deals with parenting, that is, how the girl was being reared. The Bronfenbrenner Scale, with its Loving, Punishing and Demanding items, was administered to the girls to get their perceptions on how they were being reared. Their mothers responded to questions about their aspirations for the girls and whether or not they talked with their daughters about the daughter's educational and occupational goal. Mothers also responded to the Kohn Parental Value Scale (Kohn, 1969). This scale was designed to measure characteristics mothers valued in their children. Factor analysis revealed that one set of items emphasized character building, with statements to the effect that it is important that the child tries hard to succeed, has self-control, and is dependable. The other factor contains items that reflects a mother's consideration that her child have an outgoing personality. Mothers also responded, in an agree-disagree format, to seven items from an achievement value orientation scale used by Rosen in a study of the values of mothers and their sons.

The child at middle childhood. The third block of factors deals with the girl at middle childhood, what she was like as a fifth or sixth grader. We have a measure of her self-concept, her academic performance, and measures of her occupational and educational aspirations and expectations. These personality, performance, and aspiration factors can be viewed as the outcomes of the parenting the girl has received.

LIFE PLANS OF LOW-INCOME HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS

THEORETICAL PATHS

Background Factors	Parenting	Child as 5th or 6th grader	Youth as high school junior or senior
Father's education	Mother's achievement values	Academic performance	Academic performance
Father's occupation	Traits desired in child	Self concept	Educational aspirations and expectations
Mother's education	Child's perception of parenting	Educational aspirations and expectations	Occupational aspirations and expectations
Mother's occupation extent of employment	Parental educational aspirations and expectations for child	Occupational aspirations and expectations	Age at marriage expectations
Family's SES	Parental occupational aspirations and expectations for child		Family size expectations
Child's I.Q.	Child's perception of parental aspirations		Where prefers to live
Race			
Rural-urban residence			

The youth in high school. The final block of factors consists of items dealing with the youth at senior or junior high school age. It contains measures of her age at marriage expectations, family size expectations, academic performance, educational and occupational aspirations, and residential preferences.

The organization of this paper is as follows. Variations in the life plans of high school girls--the items in the final block--will be analyzed to discover influences of items in the prior blocks, that is, the background factors, parenting behavior, and middle childhood factors. The analyses concentrate on age at marriage expectations and family size expectations. Occupational, educational, and residential plans are largely used as explanatory variables.

Age at Marriage Expectations

Marriage and its timing have considerable impact on the life plans and life chances. For women, youthful marriage has a number of costs. One cost of early marriage is its association with higher fertility which, in turn, exacerbates economic difficulties and may not be in the best interest of society. Another cost of youthful marriage is the greater risk of divorce associated with it. This association has been recognized for years and still prevails. For girls particularly, youthful marriage is an effective barrier to higher education. This may involve three costs. First, there is the deprivation of the education itself. Second, there is the lowered probability of finding satisfaction in an occupational role. The third cost is an economic one, the lowered earnings of a woman who was not able to prepare herself for a good-paying job. In view of these costs, one can agree with Elder and Rockwell's conclusion that "...early marriage identifies a life course of relative deprivation" (1976).

Background Factors and Age at Marriage Expectations

A series of background factors were investigated for their relationships with age at marriage expectations of high school girls. One of these was race. It was found that white girls had a mean age at marriage expectation of 20.6 years, rural blacks 23.5 and urban blacks 23.4. All of the white girls lived in rural areas but it can be noted that among blacks the residence factor was not related to marriage plans. Detailed analyses discovered four general reasons why black girls are more willing than white girls to delay marriage. One reason is that they have higher educational and occupational goals than white girls and these higher goals are related to a delay in marital timing. Another reason is that the black girls come from larger and somewhat poorer families which means that there is less likelihood of receiving parental aid for a youthful marriage. Still a third reason is that black girls have fewer opportunities to marry in that the men who they could marry do not want to marry young, while a high proportion of white males expect to do so. Finally, black girls seem less interested in marriage itself in that they are not as likely to consider being a housewife only, they are more likely to see a woman's role as including employment outside the home, and they are less likely to have talked with parents, relatives, and others about marriage, children, and working mothers.

Turning to another background factor, mother's education showed practically no relationship with girl's expected age at marriage for any of the three groups of girls. For all three groups, however, the higher the father's education, the older the girl expected to be at marriage.

Mothers were given an occupational score of one to three depending on whether they did not work outside the home, worked part-time, or worked full-time. For all three groups of girls it was found that the higher the mother's work score, the older the girl's expected age at marriage. None of the

relationships, however, was statistically significant. For both rural and urban black girls, a statistically significant relationship was found between the prestige score of mother's occupation and girl's age at marriage expectations. That is, the higher the prestige of her mother's occupation, if the mother was working outside the home, the older the girl expected to be at marriage. There was no relationship between mother's occupational prestige and girl's marriage plans among white girls.

Girls in the sample were given the Otis Test of Mental Ability when they were in the fifth or sixth grade. Assuming mental ability is a relatively stable factor, it can be treated as a background factor. The Otis score was positively related to a number of variables in the study such as the girl's educational aspirations and her mother's aspirations for her. However, there was no relationship at all between the Otis score and age at marriage expectations for white girls or for rural black girls. Urban black girls showed a modest but nonsignificant relationship with the higher the Otis score the older the girl expected to be at time of marriage.

Parenting Behavior and Age at Marriage Expectations

A fundamental assumption in the social-psychology of childrearing is that parenting behavior makes a difference. For good or for ill, what we do to children affects their personalities. The investigation of the effects of parenting during the middle childhood years on age at marriage expectations deals both with the girls' perceptions of parenting as well as reports from their mothers.

Perceived parenting behavior. Perceived parenting behavior was measured by the girls responses to the Bronfenbrenner Parent Behavior Questionnaire (Devereaux, Bronfenbrenner, and Rodgers, 1969). Siegelman conducted a factor analysis of the scale items and concluded that there were three dimensions labeled loving, punishing, and demanding (Siegelman, 1965: 163). A factor analysis by Proctor, the statistician on the present regional

study, found essentially the same groupings (Project S-63, 54).

Siegelman (1965) concluded that the loving items depict a parent who is readily available for counsel, support, and assistance. Such a parent further enjoys being with the child, praises the child, is affectionate, concerned, and has confidence in the child. Reasoning that loving parenting should result in girls feeling good about themselves, and thus about their potentials, the hypothesis was phrased: The more loving the perceived parenting, the older the girl will expect to be at time of marriage.

Girls' perceptions of having a loving mother showed a modest relationship with later age at marriage but only for rural black girls. Basically, however, the loving items did not have good predictive value.

Siegelman (1965) describes Factor II, Punishment, of the Bronfenbrenner Parent Behavior Questionnaire as follows. "'Punishment' shows the greatest amount of consistency on the scale factor loadings. This factor characterizes a parent who often uses physical and nonphysical punishment with little concerns for the feelings and needs of his child, and frequently for no apparent reason. Although rejection or hostility by the parent is not explicitly noted in the items, it is strongly suggested." One can assume that a girl who perceives she is being punished further perceives that she is in need of punishment. Thus, less punishing should result in a girl feeling good about herself and her potentials. Accordingly, the study hypothesis became: The lower the punishing score the older the girl will be expected to be at time of marriage.

About half of the punishing items of the Bronfenbrenner scale showed a modest correlation with expected age at marriage for white girls, and several more were in the right direction. While a number of punishing items were in the right direction for both rural and urban black girls, all of the correlations were quite low and none was significant. There is thus

some support for the hypothesis for white girls but not for black girls.

The demanding factor seems to contain a mixture of items. They could reflect a strict kind of parenting that should prepare a girl for the world outside the home or they could reflect an overburdening kind of parenting that would make a girl anxious to leave home. For urban black girls, the more demanding the mother was perceived to be the lower the girl's expected age at marriage. The demanding items did not work for rural black or white girls.

Mothers' responses. Perceived parenting may not be the same as what the mother actually does. Since the mothers were also interviewed, we can determine whether or not what the mothers said they expected of their daughters is related to the girls age at marriage expectations. Mothers were asked how frequently they talked to their child about how far she should go in school. Talking a lot about school plans was associated with younger age at marriage expectations for urban black girls and white girls but with older ages for rural black girls.

Mothers also responded to a question which asked how far they would like their daughters to go in school. This variable did not prove to be important for white girls or rural black girls. For urban black girls, the younger they expected to marry the more likely their mothers reported that they hoped the girl finished college. Talking to a daughter about the kind of job she might hold was positively related to age at marriage expectations for both urban and rural black girls. There was no correlation among whites. There was no relationship between prestige of occupation desired by black mothers for their daughters and their daughters expected age at marriage. Among whites, the higher the prestige of the mothers occupational aspiration for daughters, the older the girl expected to be at marriage.

As mentioned earlier, the Kohn Parental Value scale was administered

to mothers. Among whites only, mothers stress on the development of outgoing personality traits was modestly associated with lower age at marriage. Basically, however, despite its theoretical importance the Kohn scale did not work well in explaining the different age at marriage expectations of low income black or white girls.

Mothers also responded to seven items from the Rosen achievement value orientation scale. There was little support for the hypothesis that mothers who value achievement rear daughters who also value achievement and who thus are willing to postpone marriage.

Middle Childhood Factors and Age at Marriage Expectations

The investigation of middle childhood factors rests on the assumption that the goals and personalities of fifth and sixth graders would be related to later expressions of their life plans. It was anticipated that as early as middle childhood some girls would have the attitude that they are the sort of person who should plan an extended education and should aspire to an occupational career. They would have a good self concept. Such girls were expected to be willing or anxious to delay marriage. Meanwhile, it was expected that other girls would have a different attitude set. They would have a lower self-concept and would have lower educational and occupational goals. It was expected that such girls, at high school age, would expect to marry at younger ages.

Self-concept. How children perceive themselves should be related to what they do, and what they will attempt to do. Lipsitt's self-concept scale was used to test the hypothesis that the better the self-concept, the older the girl would expect to be when she marries. The scale consists of twenty-two descriptive words or phrases which the child checked according to how well she believed it described the way she feels about herself. Good self-concept was found to be associated with later age at marriage only for

rural black girls.

Occupational aspirations. For black girls, there was practically no relationship between the prestige score of the occupation they named in grade school as the one they really wanted and the expected age at marriage they gave at high school age. Interestingly, for urban black girls only, the prestige of the job they expected to have, as opposed to the one most desired, showed a significant correlation with age at marriage plans; the higher the prestige of expected occupation, the later the expected age at marriage. For white girls, there was a negative, significant relationship between prestige of desired and age at marriage plans and there was no association between expected job and age at marriage expectations.

Educational aspirations. For black girls, whether rural or urban, there was no association between the years of schooling desired or expected and age at marriage expectations. Among white girls, the greater the desired number of years of schooling, the older the expected age at marriage ($r = .25$, significant beyond .01 level). Similarly, the greater the expected years of school, the older the expected age at marriage ($r = .32$, significant beyond .01 level).

Adolescent Factors Related to Age at Marriage Expectations

The parenting and middle childhood factors will be summarized at the end of the section dealing with factors affecting age at marriage expectations. The next task is to summarize the analyses of the factors measured when the respondents were juniors or seniors in high school.

Occupational Saliency

One concept used in this stage of the investigation was that of occupational saliency or how central a place working outside the home had in the lives of high school girls. Low occupational saliency is conceptualized as

aspiration for less prestigious jobs, lack of seriousness of occupational plans, poor job knowledge, perception of unfavorable reward-cost balance in an occupational role, and perception of favorable reward-cost balance in a wife-homemaker role.

One item dealing with the seriousness of the high school girls was a question asking if they had ever thought about the kind of job they might have in the future. The older the expected age at marriage, the more likely they were to say that they had thought a lot about it. Another measure of seriousness was an item dealing with the persons to whom they had talked about a future job. For white girls and urban black girls, none of the analyses showed significant or systematic differences between expected age at marriage by the various persons talked to about future jobs. For rural black girls, both talking to an older sibling and talking with some other relative were associated with younger age at marriage. However, talking with an adult friend or neighbor about a future job was associated with older age at marriage. One explanation for these findings is that girls who are more serious about an occupational career seek information outside their families while the less serious consult with family members.

The only measure of occupational knowledge available was whether the girl was able to state an educational requirement for the job she said she wanted or whether, conversely, she replied "don't know." The older the girls expected to be at marriage, the more likely they were to specify an educational requirement. This was true for white girls and for both categories of black girls.

The perceived rewards of an occupation were tapped by asking the girls how important were each of seven features, such as making money and helping others, in the job they desired. For white and urban black girls, the older the expected age at marriage, the more likely they were to attach importance

to the chance for exciting and interesting work. For white girls only, the older they expected age at marriage, the more likely were they to attach importance to the job reward of helping other people.

It was reasoned that among the costs of an occupational career is that of overcoming barriers to get the occupation one wants. Among urban black girls, the older the expected age at marriage, the less likely was not having enough money for college seen as a strong barrier to occupational achievement, but there was no association for rural black girls. Among black girls, the older the expected age at marriage, the more race was seen as an occupational barrier. An ex-post-facto explanation, not consistent with the barrier hypothesis, is that since black girls who expect to marry young also aspire to lower-prestige occupations, their race, realistically, is not likely to interfere with their job plans. Consistent with the barrier hypothesis, the later the age at expected marriage, the less likely were urban black girls to see the necessity for leaving family and friends as a barrier to getting a job they wanted.

Among white girls, the older the expected age at marriage, the less likely not enough money for college was perceived as a barrier to occupational achievement. White girls who expected to delay marriage were more likely to see insufficient job information and their sex as barriers to getting the job they wanted. This could be due to the fact that they aspired to higher level jobs and it is realistic to be concerned about their sex and lack of job information.

Contrary to the barrier hypothesis, more black and white girls who expected to delay marriage saw the lack of job opportunities in and around their home communities as a strong barrier to their occupational aspirations than did girls who expected to marry young. It is true that there are fewer opportunities in the small towns and rural areas for the higher level jobs to which these girls who expect to delay marriage aspire. But this would only be a barrier if they also perceived that they could not move geographically or if

the desire to remain in the home community was strong.

The opposite side of occupational saliency is the perceived reward in the wife-homemaker only role. Respondents were asked to check any of twenty jobs on a list that they had recently been thinking about for themselves. Checking "housewife only" was significantly related to youthful marriage for white girls and for both rural and urban black girls. Responses to a scale measuring attitudes toward women working outside the home showed a statistically significant relationship with age at marriage plans for white girls only, that is, the more accepting the position on married women working outside the home the later the expected age at marriage. Particularly for white girls, the measures indicate support for the hypothesis that the greater the perceived rewards in the homemaker role, the younger will be the expected age at marriage.

The tests of the various hypotheses, taken together, are seen as supporting the general hypothesis that the lower the saliency of an occupational role in a girl's life plans, the younger will be the expected age at marriage.

Residential Preferences

Where a person wants to live as an adult is part of his or her life plans. Two items on the questionnaire dealt with residential preference. It was found that twenty percent of the urban black girls who planned to delay marriage wanted to live in their present community or very near it as opposed to 71 percent of those who wanted to marry in their teens. About 30 percent of the rural black girls wanted to remain in their home community but there was no association with age at marriage expectations. White girls felt very strongly about remaining in their home communities, with 86 percent of those planning to marry in their teens and 55 percent of those planning to postpone marriage giving this response.

A second residential item dealt with size-of-place preferences. A sizeable proportion of both rural black and white girls planning to delay marriage, 59 percent and 63 percent respectively, wanted to live in the country or in a small town. For white girls, the proportion giving this response was lower than those for girls planning to marry at a youthful age. There was no relationship between size-of-place preferences and age at marriage expectations for urban black girls.

Educational Plans

While there is a high correlation between occupational and educational aspirations, the independent effects of educational plans on age at marriage expectations were investigated. For all three groups of girls, the higher the educational aspirations at high school age, the later the age at marriage. The coefficient of correlation (.30) was significant only for white girls. The relationship between age at marriage expectations and educational expectations--how far in school they think they really will go--was about the same as that for aspirations. There was no consistent relationship between academic performance in high school and age at marriage plans.

Summary of Factors Affecting Age at Marriage Expectations

Before turning to other aspects of the life plans of low-income girls, let me summarize the findings with regard to age at marriage expectations. The following background factors were found to be associated with age at marriage expectations:

Race - Black girls, older age at marriage expectations

Father's education - The higher the father's education, the older the girl expected to be at marriage

Mother's work score - The higher the mother's work score (reflecting full, part-time or no work outside the home), the older the girl expected to be at marriage

Prestige of mother's occupation - The higher the prestige of the mother's occupation, the older the girl expected to be at marriage (both categories of black girls only).

The following middle childhood parenting behavior patterns were found to be associated with age at marriage expectations.

Perception of loving mother - A modest relationship showing the more loving the mother the later the expected age at marriage (rural black girls only)

Perception of punishing mother - The more punishing the mother, the younger the expected age at marriage (white girls only)

Perception of demanding mother - The more demanding the mother, the younger the expected age at marriage (urban black girls only)

Mother's occupational counseling - Talking with daughter about a possible future job was associated with later age at marriage (urban and black girls only). The higher the prestige of mother's occupational aspiration for daughters, the older the girl expected to be at marriage (white girls only).

The following features of the girls' personalities and attitudes at middle-childhood were found to be associated with age at marriage expectations:

Self-concept - The better the self-concept, the later the age at marriage expectation (rural black girls only)

Occupational aspirations and expectations - The higher the prestige of expected (but not desired) occupation, the later the expected age at marriage (urban black girls only). The higher the prestige of desired occupation, the lower the expected age at marriage (white girls only)

Educational aspirations and expectations - The higher the educational aspirations and expectations, the later the expected age at marriage (white girls only).

At high school age, the following factors were found to be associated with age at marriage expectations:

Occupational saliency - The lower occupational saliency, the younger the expected age at marriage

Residential preferences - Desire to remain in home community associated with younger expected age at marriage (white and urban black girls only)

Educational aspirations and expectations - The higher the educational aspirations and expectations, the older the expected age at marriage.

Family Size Preferences

A girl's family size preferences is an important aspect of her life plans. While the situation is changing, child care falls disproportionately on the mother as opposed to the father. The more children a woman has, the less time she has for pursuits other than child care. Children can interfere with her ability to continue education beyond high school and to pursue an occupational career. The more children a woman has, the older she will be when childbearing and the care of young children is completed and, consequently, the more difficult it will be to retrain for an occupational career.

The purpose of this section is to report our findings on background, middle childhood, and adolescent factors associated with family size expectations.

Background Factors and Family Size Expectations

Race and rural-urban residence proved to be two important background factors associated with family size expectations. As shown in Table 00, rural white girls were the least likely to say that they expected to have no children or one child followed by rural black girls and urban black girls in that order. Fully 46 percent of the rural black girls expected to have three or more children, a considerably higher proportion naming this family size than of the other two categories of respondents.

Table 00. Family Size Preferences of Low-Income High School Girls

	Rural Black			Urban Black			Rural White		
None	8	11.3	18	11	17.2	28.1	22	12.5	8.8
One	5	7.0		7	10.9		11	6.3	
Two	25	35.2		27	42.2		91	51.7	
Three or more	33	46.5		19	29.7		52	29.5	

Another background factor investigated was socioeconomic status. While the respondents were all from low income families, it was possible to divide them into higher and lower socioeconomic categories using the Hollingshead technique. There was a tendency for girls in the higher of the two low income groups to have smaller family size expectations. This was true for both urban and rural blacks but particularly for whites, where it was found that of the girls who expected no children 41 percent were in the higher group as opposed to 27 percent of those who expected three or more children. There was a tendency also for the girls expecting no children or one child to come from families where the husband-father was employed while more of the girls expecting two or three or more children came from families where he was unemployed. Thus, even within a low income sample it appears that expected family size varies inversely with socioeconomic status.

Parents education, while part of socioeconomic status, could be expected to have more direct influence on girls' family size expectations, perhaps through effects on girls' status aspirations. Mothers education was positively related to their daughter's family size expectations for white girls and rural black girls but inversely related for urban black girls. Father's education showed no relationship for white and urban black girls but was positively related with family size expectations for rural black girls with a coefficient of correlation of .17, significant at the .07 level.

Previous research has investigated the relationship between size of family of orientation and one's expected family size. One general hypothesis is that experience with a certain division of labor within the family and a certain number of family roles leads one to view these things as normal and desirable which, in turn, leads one to repeat the arrangement in his or her family of procreation. In the present study, there was no relationship between the number of people in

the household and girls' expected family size. Similarly, there was no relationship between size of nuclear family, whether or not they were all still living at home, and the girl's expected family size, whether white, rural black, or urban black.

Another family structure variable of theoretical importance is whether the respondent was living in a father-present or in a mother-only household. Almost all of the white girls were living in a mother-father household so the tendency for this to be associated with lower family size expectations may not be too important. Among rural black girls, living with both parents was associated with larger family size expectations and a similar, although much weaker, prevailed for urban black girls.

Whether or not a girl's mother is employed outside the home could be expected to have an influence on the girl's life plans. A working mother should serve as a role model showing what can be done and, perhaps, what should be done. Among white girls in the present study, more of the girls who expected to have three or more children had mothers who were emplyed full-time outside the home, but the relationship was not strong. The opposite relationship was found for both rural and urban black girls, that is, the girls whose mothers were employed full-time outside the home were more likely to expect to have no children or one child. Where the mother was a housewife only, the black girls were more likely to say that they expected to have two or three or more children. The relationship was particularly noticeable among the rural black girls. Fourteen percent of those expecting no children had a mother who was a housewife only while this was true of 44% of those expecting three or more children.

Middle Childhood Factors

Clearly, a girl does not first think about how many children she expects someday to have as she approaches high school graduation. The family size expectation she states as a late teenager presumably has been the subject of

a host of developmental influences in her family, among peers, and at school. Presumably also, her thoughts on the number of children she would like or expects to have were not isolated from other aspects of her plans such as age at marriage and an occupational role. In this section we investigate middle childhood factors that may be related to family size expectations. Particular attention is given to ideas on occupation and education among the fifth and sixth graders and how they relate to how the girls as high school seniors or juniors say they feel about expected family size. A number of other variables measured in middle childhood are also investigated for their relationship with family size expectations.

Occupational Plans

The fifth and sixth grade girls were asked whether they had ever thought about a job they might have in the future, what job they would really like to have and what job they realistically expected to have. They were also asked to which of a number of specific persons, if any, they had talked to about their occupational plans. Taken together, these items can tell us a lot about the occupational thinking of fifth and sixth grade girls.

For white girls, there was a significant inverse relationship between thinking about a job in the future and the expected size of the family. For both urban black girls and white girls, the higher the prestige of the occupation one would really like to have, the smaller the expected family size. The same relationship held for expected occupation and expected family size. Rural black girls showed a positive relationship between prestige of occupational desire and expectations and family size expectations. Perhaps this was due to the large size expectations of rural black girls and the fact that their occupational choices did not cover a wide prestige range.

For all three categories of girls, not talking to mother about an occupation the girl might have was associated with large family size expectations. This was a highly significant factor among rural black girls with a coefficient of correlation of .40. For white girls and for urban black girls the coefficients were .13 and .15 respectively. Not talking to father about one's occupation was related to large family size expectations but only for urban black girls, while not talking to older sibling was associated with large family size expectations for white girls and for urban black girls. All these associations were significant at the .05 level. The response that the girl had talked to no one about a job she might have was associated with larger family size expectations. It was statistically significant only for the rural black girls probably because most of the girls have talked to someone.

Taken together, these findings seem quite important. They show that as early as the fifth and sixth grade girls are thinking about an occupation they might pursue. Some have higher aspirations than others and some talk about their occupational goals with their mothers and other people. In general, those girls who have higher aspirations and who talk about their goals later will state smaller family size expectations.

Educational Plans

A parallel analysis was made of the educational goals of the fifth and sixth grade girls. There was no relationship between educational aspirations or expectations and family size expectations. Apparently, girls of this age compartmentalize their thinking about their occupational and educational goals. There was a tendency for not talking to anyone about educational plans to be associated with larger family size expectations but it was statistically significant only for white girls. Attitudes toward school and studying showed practically no relationship with family size expectations.

Adolescent Factors Associated with Family Size Expectations

In this section data are reported on various aspects of educational and occupational plans, as measured at adolescence, and their relationships to family size expectations measured at the same point in time. One general explanatory concept is occupational saliency which refers to how central a place an occupation has in a girl's life plans. The general hypothesis is that the larger the family size preference the lower will be the salience of an occupational role. A number of specific hypotheses can be stated to test this relationship.

Prestige of Desired Occupation

While it is possible to want many children and simultaneously aspire to a high-level occupation, it is hypothesized the larger the number of children a girl expects to have, the lower will be the prestige of the occupation to which she aspires. An item on the questionnaire asked what kind of job the respondent expected to have in the future. The score on Duncan's Socioeconomic Index is used as the indicator of occupational prestige (Reiss, 1961). For urban black and rural white girls the findings were in the anticipated direction but for rural black girls there was a positive correlation (.30, significant beyond .01 level) indicating that the more children a girl expected the higher was the prestige of her expected occupation.

Seriousness of Occupational Plans

Among girls who stated a preference for a job, some have thought about it a while, have talked to others about it, and have at least a mental strategy for achieving their goal. Others, while stating an occupational choice, have given less thought to the matter. This difference among girls is conceptualized as seriousness of occupational plans. It is hypothesized that the larger the family size preference, the less serious are a girl's occupational plans.

An item on the questionnaire asked, "Have you ever thought about what kind of job you might have in the future?" Possible responses were "Yes, a lot," "Yes, a little," and "No," scored from 1 to 3 respectively. For all categories of girls, there was found a low negative correlation, indicating that, contrary to the hypothesis, the more children a girl wanted the more she had thought about a future job.

It was reasonsed that if a high school girl is serious about her occupational plans she would share her thoughts and plans with meaningful others in her life. Not to talk about the job that she would start on, or start preparing for, in a year or two would suggest a lack of seriousness of purpose.

Among white girls, the more children a girl wanted the less likely she was to say that she had talked with her mother, her father, an older sibling, or a teacher about her futue job. The coefficient of correlation was significant only for whether or not the girl had talked with her father about her future job. Among urban black girls, however, the findings were in the opposite direction. That is, the more children a girl expected, the more likely she was to say that she had talked to her mother, father, other relative, teacher, adult friend and age mate about her future job. The coefficient of correlation for the last named relationship was -.22, significant at the .04 level; the remaining correlations were not significant.

For rural black girls, the findings are mixed. Talking with mother, adult friend or neighbor, and the general category "someone else" were in the hypothesized direction with the larger the expected family size, the less likely were these conversations about future job reported. Talking with acult friend or neighbor, as a matter of fact, showed the strongest relationship of any referent person for either race with a coefficient of correlation of .49, significant beyond the .01 level. Talking to "someone else" was also

highly significant (r = .33). However, talking to father, other relatives, teachers, and age mates, while not significantly related to family size expectations, tended to be in the direction contrary to that hypothesized.

In general, while the referent persons were different, talking about the job one might hold in the future was observed among girls with expectations for small size of family for rural white and rural black girls. This is consistent wiht the idea that those who are serious about working outside the home will both talk about their occupational plans and will have family size expectations consistent with working outside the home. However, this pattern was not found among urban black girls.

Another dimension of seriousness of occupational plans is that conceptualized as occupational knowledge. It is reasoned that girls who have considerable occupational knowledge are more interested in an occupation and that girls with meager occupational knowledge are more interested in other aspects of their life plans, such as marriage and having children. It was therefore hypothesized that the larger the expected family size, the lower would be the girl's knowledge of the occupation she states she would like to pursue.

As indicated previously, one way occupational knowledge was measured in the present study was through an item which asks how far one has to go in school to get the kind of job the respondent said she wanted. Respondents were classified as those who specified some educational requirement and those who replied that they did not know the requirement.

Over ninety percent of rural black girls specified some educational requirement and of those who did not there was no relationship with family size preference. Among urban black girls there was a tendency for those who wanted two or three or more children to say that they did not know the requirements of the job they preferred. White girls showed this same tend-

ency. Neither relationship was significant, however. The results suggest that it would be worthwhile to develop a more refined method of measuring educational requirements and a more comprehensive method of occupational knowledge.

Perceived Rewards and Costs in an Occupational Role

When deciding whether or not to work and what kind of work she wants to do, it is assumed that a girl mentally considers the rewards and costs of her options. Girls who plan fully to embrace an occupational role would see a favorable reward - cost balance in this role and, presumably, would be willing to restrict the number of children they could have in order to achieve their occupational goal.

Respondents were asked which of six features, such as the chance for exciting or interesting work and the chance for helping other people, were "not very important," "important," or "extremely important." Among rural black girls, the importance of job features did not vary by family size expectations except that "having a job that gives steady employment" was more likely to be judged extremely important by those girls who did not expect to have any children ($r = -.20$, significant at .06 level). Among urban blacks, however, the larger the expected family size, the more likely the girl was to respond that steady employment was an extremely important job feature ($r = .24$, significant at .03 level). This was the only job feature in which there was a significant difference in evaluation by family size expectations.

For white girls, the picture was entirely different. The larger the expected family size, the less importance was attached to any of the job attributes. For the rewards of making a lot of money, becoming an important person, and in exciting and interesting work, the correlations were signi-

ficant at the .05 level. For having a job that provided steady work, allowed one to help other people, and to be one's own boss, the correlations approached significance. There is thus support, for white girls, for the hypothesis that the larger the expected family size, the less likely they would be to see rewards in the occupational role. The lack of support among black girls may be due to the fact that most of them, regardless of family size expectations, realize that they will have to work outside the home.

A common cost of an occupational career, and particularly occupational mobility in the United States is the need to move away from one's home community. It is reasoned that girls who see an occupation as having a central place in their lives would be more willing than other girls to move away from their home communities.

For rural black girls, the larger the expected family size, the more likely the girl was to respond that she would like to live in or near her home community, and the less likely she responded that she would like to live in a different part of the United States. The coefficient of correlation was - .23, significant at the .05 level. This pattern, however, was not found among the urban blacks. White girls, all of whom were rural, exhibited the same pattern as rural blacks, the larger the expected family size, the less the willingness to leave the home community. For rural girls of both races, therefore, those for whom childbearing seemed more central in their lives want to remain in their home community while those for an occupation is more central are willing to move.

A second residential preference question appeared on the questionnaire, this one dealing with the size of the place in which the girl would like to live in the future. This was found to be important only for white girls among whom it was found that the larger the expected family size the smaller the

size of the place in which she wished to live (r = -.21, significant at .03 level). The family-oriented girl thus wants to stay around home in a small community; the occupationally oriented girl is willing to move and prefers a larger city.

Perceived Rewards and Costs of Homemaker Only Role

It was anticipated that girls who wanted more children would place a higher evaluation on the wife-mother-homemaker role than would those who want no children or one child. Respondents were asked to check any of twenty jobs that they had recently been thinking about for themselves. Only twenty percent of the rural black girls checked "housewife only" and there was little relationship between family size preference and this response. For urban black girls, there was a strong relationship with the more children a girl wanted the more likely she was to say that she considered the "housewife only" role. The coefficient of correlation was .34, significant beyond the .01 level. None of the urban black girls who wanted no children or only one child wanted only to be a housewife, while thirty-seven percent of those who expected three or more children gave this response. White girls who wanted two, three or more children were more likely to say that they had considered being a housewife only than were those who wanted no children or one child, but relationship was not statistically significant.

Educational Factors

Even for women, having children and pursuing an education are not intrinsically incompatible. One would, of course, have to pay attention to the timing of the events for if childbearing starts early it may be quite difficult later to return to school and reach one's educational goals. The more children a woman had, the less likely would she be able to return to school. Women could, of course, have high educational aspirations, reach their goals, and then have

children, which implies a priority within their life plans. One would expect those who follow this pattern would not expect to have many children for their behavior suggests that getting an education is of more importance than having children. The general hypothesis is that the more importance that is attached to education, the lower will be the expected number of children. Importance of education is operationalized in terms of desired education, expected education, seriousness of educational plans, academic attitudes, and school grades.

Educational Aspirations and Expectations

Educational aspirations were measured by a question asking the girls how far they would really like to go in school if they had their choice. Responses were coded from 1 to 8 for eighth grade to education beyond college respectively. There was a parallel question for how far they felt they really would go in school.

For white girls, it was found that the larger was the expected family size, the lower were the educational aspirations and expectations. Neither relationship, however, was statistically significant. Similar, but stronger relationships were found for urban black girls with a coefficient of correlation of -.21, significant at the .06 level, between expected family size and desired level of education and -.14 for expected level of education. With rural black girls, however, the case was entirely different. A positive correlation of .25, significant beyond the .05 level, was found between expected family size and desired education and one of .38, significant beyond the .01 level, was found for expected educational level. Looking more closely at the findings, it was noted that 45% of the rural black girls who expect to have three or more children also expect at least to finish college. None of the girls who expected to have no children expect to finish college and 20 and 28% of those who expect to have one or two children respectively expect to finish college. These findings are

difficult to interpret. High fertility is traditionally normative among low income, rural blacks but high educational achievement is not. Thus, we need to explain why about 18% of the rural black girls want no children or only one child yet have not coupled this with a desire for education beyond high school. We also need to explain why 46% of the rural black girls have retained traditional high fertility values but superimposed on them a desire for higher education.

Seriousness of Educational Plans

In part, the seriousness of educational plans can be inferred from the relationship between desired and expected educational levels. It was reasoned, also, that talking about one's educational plans is also an indication of seriousness of intentions and desires. Among white girls, the larger the expected family size, the more likely the girl was to say that she had not talked with her father or mother about how far she should go in school, but only the coefficient for talking with father was statistically significant. For no other person, such as sibling, adult friend, or teacher, was there a relationship between expected family size and talking about educational plans. For urban black girls, talking to mother or father about school plans showed no relationship to expected family size. There was a modest relationship, but in the wrong direction between talking to a sibling or another relative about educational plans, that is, those who did so had higher family size expectations. For rural black girls, talking with mother or an adult friend about school plans was associated with expecting smaller family sizes. The coefficients of correlation were .24 and .22, both significant beyond the .05 level.

Academic Attitudes

It can be reasoned that girls who are primarily interested in having children would not be too interested in school and would not display favorable academic attitudes. This would lead to the hypothesis that the larger the expected family

size, the poorer would be the academic attitudes. Items from the Elder Academic Motivation scale were used to measure study habits and attitudes toward school.

Among white girls, three items, studying or reading at home, wanting to come to school, and trying to do school work, rather than relaxing, when sick, were found to be related to the expectation of small family sizes. The coefficient of correlation for trying to do school work was .19, significant beyond the .01 level; the other two coefficients approached significance.

For urban black girls there was a fairly consistent pattern between having favorable academic attitudes and expecting to have a small number of children. Stating an interest in school, trying to get good grades, studying or reading at home, finishing homework, wanting to come to school, trying to do school work even when sick, and wanting to come back to school after summer vacation were all related to low family size expectations. Only the coefficient of correlation for trying to do school work even when sick was significantly related.

Rural black girls showed an inconsistent pattern for expected family size and attitudes toward school. One item, finishing assigned school work showed a coefficient of correlation of .24, significant beyond the .05 level, indicating that lower family expectations were associated with favorable school attitudes. Another item, agreeing that she would come to school if she had her way, showed a coefficient of -.25, significant beyond the .05 level, indicating that larger family size expectations were associated with liking to come to school.

School Grades

A test was made of the relationship between mental ability, as measured by the Otis Test of Mental Ability, and family size expectations. There was a very slight positive relationship. This suggests, then, that any differences in school performances and family size expectations among the girls can be accounted for by motivation, willingness to study, regularity of attendance

and similar factors, rather than by mental ability. School performance was measured by a self-report of grades earned during the current year, with choices ranging from mostly As to mostly Ds or Fs. It was reasoned that emphasis on the maternal role would have a negative impact on school performance and, thus, the larger the expected family size the lower the grades earned during the current year.

Forty-three percent of the urban black girls reported getting mostly Bs and 42 percent said they got mostly Cs. Seventy percent of the girls expecting to have no children reported mostly Bs as did 68% of those expecting one child, 35 percent for two children, and 29 percent for those expecting three or more children. The only girls who reported reclining mostly Ds or Fs were those who expected to have a family size of two or larger. Getting good grades, that is, mostly Bs, is clearly associated with the expectation for no children or one child for urban black girls.

Among rural black girls, none of whom reported getting mostly Ds or Fs and only a few of whom reported mostly As, there was no clear relationship between family size expectations and grades in high school. Fifty-nine percent of the white girls reported getting mostly Cs and 30 percent reported mostly Bs. There was a slight negative association, that is, the larger the expected family size the better the grades.

Reviewing the various educational factors, it is noted that educational aspirations and expectations were related to family size expections for white and urban black girls, seriousness about educational plans, as tapped by talking about such plans, was related for white and rural black girls, academic motivation was related for white and urban black girls while grades were related to family size for urban black girls. This is interpreted as mild support for the position that there is a relationship between two aspects of girls' life plans, their educational goals and their family size goals.

It is not immediately apparent why the relationship was not consistent across the subgroups of white, rural black, and urban black girls.

The differences in family expectations of the low-income girls can be summarized by indicating those factors found to be associated with larger family size expectations.

Background Factors

- rural residence (blacks only compared)
- black race (rural only compared)
- lower socioeconomic status
- father unemployed
- living with both parents
- mother housewife only (black only)

Middle Childhood Factors

- had not thought about future job (white only)
- lower prestige of desired and expected occupation (white and urban black only)
- not talking to parents or others about future job

Adolescent Factors

- lower prestige of desired occupation (urban black and white only)
- not talking with parents and others about future job (rural black and white only)
- not knowing educational requirements of desired job
- not seeing rewards in occupational role (white only)
- wanting to remain in home community (white and rural black only)
- wanting to live in a small town (white only)
- would consider being housewife only (urban black and white girls only)

lower educational aspirations and expectations (white and urban black only)

higher educational aspirations and expectations (rural black only)

not talking with parents and others about educational plans (white and rural black only)

unfavorable attitudes toward school and studying

getting poor grades in high school (urban black only)

Summary

Throughout this paper we have reported on the association of numerous variables with two important aspects of the life plans of girls, their expected age at marriage and their expected family size. Because of the paucity of research attention to the life plans of rural youth, blacks, and females, the investigation of explanatory variables has been admittedly broad. The next step, clearly, is to analyze the data further in an effort to isolate the most important factors related to age at marriage and family size expectations. Others may want to pursue further those factors such as occupational and educational attitudes that presumably could be manipulated to reduce family size expectations or to raise age at marriage expectations. Still others may want to investigate additional factors, such as dating, love, and sex experiences. Whatever the specific emphasis, it is hoped that the report of the present research will encourage additional work on the life plans of low-income girls.

References

Devereaux, Edward C., Bronfenbrenner, Urie, and Rodgers, Robert R. "Child-rearing in England and the United States." Journal of Marriage and the Family, 31 (1969), 257-270.

Elder, Glenn H., Jr. and Richard C. Rockwell. "Marital Timing in Women's Life Patterns," Journal of Family History 1 (January, 1976), 34-53.

Falk, William W. and Arthur G. Cosby. "Women and the Status Attainment Process." Social Science Quarterly (September, 1974):307-314.

Kohn, Melvin. Class and Conformity. Homewood, Illinois: Dorsey Press (1969).

Lipsitt, L.P. "A Self-Concept Scale for Children and its Relationship to the Children's Form of Manifest Anxiety Scale," Child Development 29 (1958), 463-472.

Project S-63, Southern Regional Research Technical Committee. Influences on the Occupational Goals of Young People. Lexington, Kentucky, Agricultural Experiment Station (1974).

Reiss, Albert J. Occupations and Social Status. New York: The Free Press, (1961), 262-275.

Rosen, Bernard C. "The Achievement Syndrome," American Sociological Review 21 (1956), 203-211.

Siegelman, Marvin. "Evaluation of Bronfenbrenner's Questionnaire for Children Concerning Parental Behavior," Child Development 36 (1965), 163.